

January 27, 1970

Dr. Douglas W. Dunlop  
Department of Botany  
The University of Wisconsin  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201

Dear Dr. Dunlop,

I have your letter of January 5th requesting a opinion about the promotion of Dr. Thomas C. Nelson to associate professor.

I am somewhat at a loss to know how I can help you since I have had essentially no contact with Tom during the past 15 years. I knew him at a very early stage in his career and I am not sure whether my recollections of him from so long ago would have any pertinence whatsoever to his present qualifications. I certainly do recall him as an intellectually lively, energetic, affable, and generous person. He showed very great imagination but then also had a tendency to be intensely over-critical of his own ideas and I am sure that this inhibited him from pursuing a number of them to what would have been more satisfactory fruition. It was very plain that he was going through a rather more than ordinary set of emotional readjustments during that period which, absent other data, are unlikely to be of any particular importance today. Nevertheless, they do tend to blurr my vision of him and his qualifications for the role about which you asked me.

Having had so little information about him and this stems in part from his having migrated to a somewhat different line of research than was our mutual interest long ago, I was on the contrary gratified at the implicitly encouraging news that you were ready to consider his promotion. I am afraid this may not be very helpful to you. About all I can say is that I had had the warmest feelings about Tom and trust that you do indeed have enough more factual information to fill in for the long interval about which I can give no report.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr

THOMAS NELSON